

FREEDOM

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WHERE DEPORTATION IS DEATH

Manchester refugees demonstrate to shame the state

Congolese refugees in the UK have called on the government to halt plans for a mass deportation of asylum seekers from Manchester and possibly other cities even as the situation in that country deteriorates.

Alongside Human Rights Watch, the Manchester community has launched a scathing attack on New Labour, accusing it of effectively promoting the continued chaos in the Congo by failing to help curb big corporations' exploitation of the area for deposits of gold and coltan – a metal used in mobile phones and computers.

Moto goldmines plan to open the country's largest gold mining operation by 2012. The project, in the country's northeast Kilo-Moto region, will yield 400,000 ounces of gold a year, at \$294 an ounce.

Campaigners are calling on companies such as T-Mobile and Orange to take steps to ensure that raw materials used in their phones do not come from sources which involve mass bloodshed and environmental destruction.

At present, Rwandan armed forces are sweeping across the borders into the

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LENS CAP GAZA



Palestinian farmers and international human rights workers attempt to take in a parsley crop for the second time outside Al Faraheen village on the Gaza strip. Despite the human rights workers wearing hi-visibility jackets and waving a banner to indicate the party is civilian only, the group were forced to retreat from the field after they came under repeated fire from Israeli troops on 5th February.

Picture: talestotell.wordpress.com

EDUCATION DEBATE HEATS UP

In the wake of widespread student occupations over the recent Gaza conflict in universities across the country, a national demonstration for free education has been organised for 25th February in London.

Starting at the of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at noon, the demo aims to put pressure on the government to scrap plans to remove the upper limit on tuition fees in higher education, and reinstate a living grant for each student to aid working class people in getting higher education. It also calls for a refocusing of the sector on education rather than profit.

In an open letter, organisers wrote that: "Worsening the already existing inequalities in higher education, fees are greatly accelerating the development of a competi-

tive market between universities, with a tier of well-funded and prestigious institutions and another of less prestigious, underfunded ones. Along with the absence of decent student grants, they rule out the possibility of seriously expanding access, force most students who do get to university into debt and push many into casualised, low-paid jobs."

Support for the demo has come from a number of leftist, union and student organisations, including a number of student unions. It follows the recent occupation of Goldsmiths in London, during which a number of different groups called first for scholarships for Gazan students, and then for a rethink of fees for all.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

DEFENCE: Eleven Bristol-based activist groups have signed a declaration of support for nine anti-war protestors, who were arrested at the ITT-EDO arms factory in Brighton on 17th January, after they barricaded themselves into the facility and hurled equipment out of office windows, in response to the ongoing manufacture of components there which were being used in the Gaza assault last month.

EDUCATION: An occupation of Manchester University in solidarity with the people of Gaza was under threat of eviction by riot police as *Freedom* went to press. Around 200 hundred students had occupied two sections of the University, the John Owen Building and the central sorting office.

EMPLOYMENT LAW: The minimum amount of money that employers must pay staff they make redundant is set to be increased by the Government, with the launch a review of the minimum payments.

FOREIGN POLICY: Hunger striker Maria Gallestegui has entered the fourth week of her hunger strike for Gaza outside the Houses of Parliament as *Freedom* goes to press. Her goal is that the government publicly demand an end to the blockade of Gaza, announce an end to arms sales to Israel, and press for an international tribunal into Israeli war crimes.

GENDER: The Commission for Racial Equality has announced that it will target over 100 local authorities with the threat of legal action over their failure to provide specialised services for women who have experienced violence.

HEALTH: Campaigners have warned that London's NHS is descending into chaos after it was revealed that Julian Nettel, Chief Executive of Barts and the Royal London, the UK's most famous hospital, has quit his post amidst rumours of severe performance and financial problems at the Trust.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Earlier this month, council workers protested outside the Council House in Nottingham's Market Square against job cuts proposed by the city council. These would see around 400 people laid off.

MEDIA: In the light of the recent server seizure The Indymedia-UK media collective has been left with serious damage to its infrastructure. Replacing the server is likely to be expensive, and an appeal has been put out to supporters.

The group had its server seized on 22nd January after the posting of information about the judge in a recent trial case.

LENS CAP ANTI-WHALING



The Sea Shepherd vessel Steve Irwin rams the Yushin Maru No 3 whaling harpoon ship, after the ship lost control in close-quarters manoeuvring. The crew of the ship say they came under attack by Long Range acoustic weapons, causing the captain to lose his bearings while attempting to block the back of the Maru from loading up a whale carcass. Captain Paul Watson said "I was dazed by the sonic blasts being used on us at close range. I have to admit it was difficult to concentrate with that device being focused on us." The crew have now decided to end the campaign for this season.

College lecturers walk out on pay

A one-day strike in further education has taken place at colleges across the country, over a pay agreement which has not been implemented for four years now.

UCU members were out at eight of nine colleges which had been slated to see action, with the ninth, Askham Bryant College, dropping its own walkout after the college reputedly agreed to implement the pay plan.

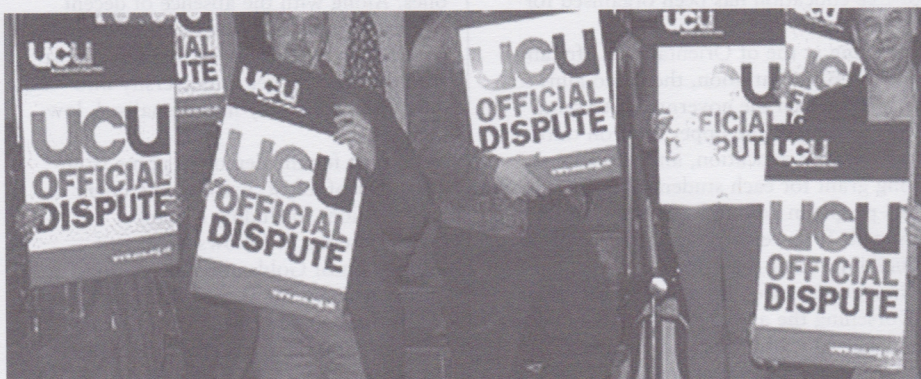
This left Croydon, Greenwich, College of North West London, Deane Valley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sandwell and Sussex Downs all observing strike action to force the colleges to honour a nationally-agreed pay rise first negotiated in 2004 as part of a general 'catch-up' agreement for the further education sector.

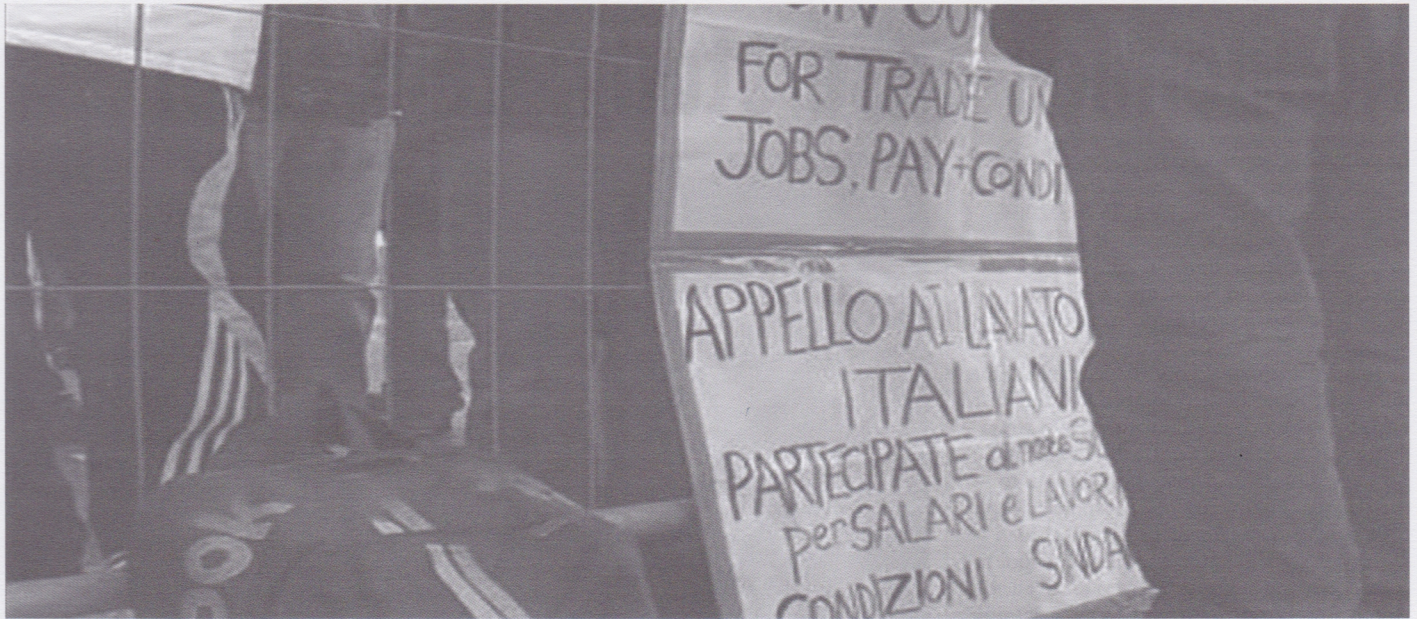
The deal, which was for a 3.2% pay rise, was subsequently ignored by the nine colleges, who have effectively tried to shave around £4,500 off the annual pay of middle-ranking lecturers.

Local reports suggested a mixed turnout for the strikes, with Croydon College suggesting that it saw minimal disruption, but a strong turnout of 200 lecturers at Sussex Downs, the College of North West London reputedly being 'brought to a standstill', Doncaster cancelling classes at both its two main campuses, and 100 walking out at Sandwell College.

In the latter case, progress may have been made after Sandwell's vice-principal denied ever intending to avoid the pay increase, informing the union that "we are going to implement it".

UCU general secretary, Sally Hunt, said: "The colleges only have themselves to blame for today's disruption. The staff are not greedy; they are merely asking for the money they should have been paid four years ago. It is the intransigence of the 'IOU colleges' that has pushed members' patience too far and forced them into today's industrial action."





Overview: The refinery strikes

In the initial stages of the wildcat strikes which took place at the Lindsey refinery in Lincolnshire from 29th January to 5th February, there were strong fears that the outcome would be a victory for nationalism.

The slogan 'British Jobs For British Workers' raised early alarm bells, with the mainstream media quickly latching on to declare that what was at stake was a racist reaction to foreign workers.

There is no doubt that certainly as the strike began, nationalist sentiment was running high. The issues at hand however were a great deal wider than initial impressions.

The unions complained that the employer, IREM, a notoriously anti-union company, was refusing to employ people from Britain, and was instead undercutting them with cheap labour shipped in from elsewhere.

Against protests from the company that its employees earned the same, workers

contended that the company was taking big sums off for room and board, pointed to evidence that the company was actually paying £1,000 less to its Portuguese staff and charged that the real purpose of the move was in any case to break organised labour in the area.

The issue of the Viking and Laval legal cases, covered last year by *Freedom*, also came to the fore, noting that local wage agreements were wide open to this kind of abuse now cheaper labour could be legally shipped in from anywhere in the EU.

As information continued to leech out, it became clear a debate was taking place within Lindsey, and as the strike escalated to incorporate 11 other sites, across the industry.

Within days, the 'British Jobs' slogan was being dropped by many of the strikers. The BNP were told they were not welcome, and

leaflets started to be put together in Italian as well as English.

The strike committee elected by the Lindsey strikers reiterated on 2nd February that their problem was with the bosses, not the Italians, starting to demand Italian workers be covered by national agreements and that the union have access to them, rather than demanding they simply be replaced with British people.

The next morning, another strike in Plymouth saw hundreds of Poles walk out in support.

As the strike drew on, union chiefs, largely outmanoeuvred in the initial stages of the strike, got back in the driving seat, negotiating with the company and coming back with a deal which would see 102 jobs created for British workers, with none lost from the existing Italians' contracts.

The victorious workforce have said more action could be on the cards.

Where deportation is death

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Democratic Republic of Congo, wiping out Hutu militias and millions have been crossing the Congo/Rwanda border. In response, violence has risen across the state as rebel groups move around to avoid capture.

Human Rights Watch has listed child soldiers, children in detention, sexual violence against young girls and women and abuses against street children – including war orphans – as problems in the country.

The situation is not enough to deter the government from chartering a flight from the UK to the Congo for late February, which would hold around a third of Manchester's Congolese residents.

Those affected have been told to appear at Dallas Court, the UK Border Agency reporting

centre in Salford Quays, from which many asylum seekers have been forcibly taken and incarcerated or deported.

"This is the hypocrisy of the British government," declared a speaker at the 150-strong rally in the Peace Gardens in Central Manchester. "This is the hypocrisy of the EU. This is the hypocrisy of the United Nations."

"If you sign the piece of paper at the end of your interview at Dallas Court," he went on to warn Congolese people in the audience, "you could be signing away your life and death."

It is not just in Manchester where deportations are happening. In Cardiff, Titi Nzamba Bolele, 38, and her children, aged three, five

and nine were hauled off to the notorious Yarl's Wood detention centre after the children started screaming when deportation was attempted and the pilot refused to carry them.

Anthony Azangisa, of the Congolese Community of Wales, warned that if the family are returned to the DRC their lives will be in real danger. He stressed that Titi, who fled the country after being accused of leaking personal details about the president's family, faces death if she returns.

Britain has been in trouble before over deportations. In July of last year, the government announced the mass deportation of some 4,000 Congolese people as part of a general removal programme despite continuing dangers in the country.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Academies case study: Lancaster

Initially, Lancashire County Council declined to take any Academies, and so the thumbscrews were put on the LEA. In late 2006, Lord Andrew Adonis, Minister for Academies, came to Lancaster. Early in 2007, it was announced that an Academy would be created on the Central Lancaster High School site.

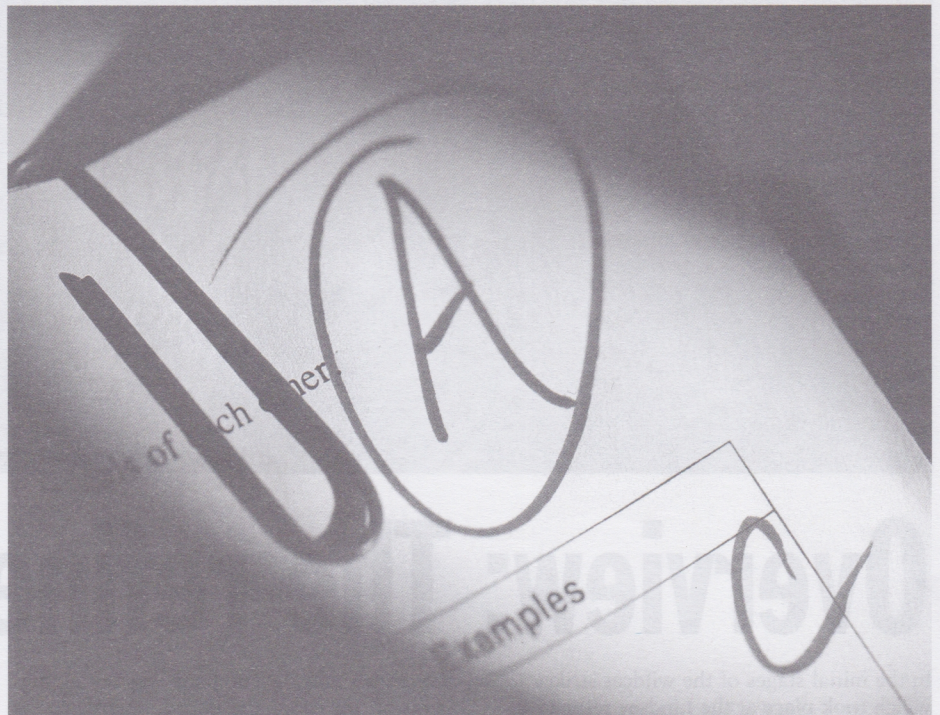
To make the new school viable, the humane killer was to be applied to both Skerton and Hornby High Schools. Immediately, a row started. A meeting in Lancaster Town Hall, on 19th June 2007, showed opposition to the scheme. Following this, no sponsor came forwards, and the Academy proposal for Lancaster stalled. Later, a troubled school in Accrington was transformed into an Academy. Another proposal, in Preston, found a sponsor in Charles Dunstone of Carphone Warehouse, said to be worth £904 million.

The proposal to close Skerton and Hornby had a negative effect.

Lancaster has two Grammar Schools, Ripley St Thomas, a Church of England school, Our Lady's, the Roman Catholic school, and Central.

Hornby, in the Lune valley, is seven miles out of town, and there are others in Morecambe, Heysham, Carnforth and Garstang. The fall in numbers on roll following declining birth rates does not affect the Grammar Schools, nor Ripley, which are over-subscribed; but it particularly hurts the others, especially when coupled with 'Admissions Blight' brought on by the ill-judged Academy proposal.

Another factor in the mix is the Government's 'National Challenge'; a hit-list of 638 schools falling below 30% of pupils attaining five or more grades A* to C in their GCSEs. Hornby achieved 28% in 2007, and 17% in



2008. Seventeen Lancashire schools fell below the line, and this, along with the collapse in admissions, would appear to seal Hornby's fate.

People are fighting back. On 9th January, parents and pupils met to oppose the closure. The 'Lancashire Locals' council meeting was petitioned. An open meeting was held on Thursday 22nd, which was opened by headteacher, Mrs Caroline Jackson, and was packed with angry parents and distressed pupils.

Councillors from Lancaster City Council and the Parish Council criticised the closure,

as did Geraldine Smith, the outspoken Labour MP for the area. Again and again, parents blamed the LEA for the situation, complaining that their minds were already made up, and that advisers actively discouraged applications.

One lady compared the affair with the attempt to close the Settle to Carlisle railway in 1987. It became obvious when the pupils spoke that the school is doing good work. The Government plan to impose Academies and to trample down small schools like Hornby is really an attack on diversity.

Stephen Booth

Mail privatisation threatens 50,000

As privatisation steps nearer for the Royal Mail in the culmination of a process which has now been five years in the making, 16,000 more jobs are to go, with perhaps another 50,000 in the pipeline.

The current wave of cuts, which continue from the 20,000 originally slated earlier this year, aims to save the company £470 million as it plumps itself up for auction following recommendations by Ofcom and Lord Mandelson.

All teams have been given a 10% target for cost reductions this year, and as part of the sell-off plan, it is thought that around half of the company's 71 mail centres could close, severely impacting on the provision of the universal service.

Freedom reported last year that the universal service itself could come into jeopardy, and predicted back in 2007 that the communications regulator would be

back to manage a privatisation.

The drive to improve profitability has already seen upwards of 100,000 jobs cut since it began in the '90s.

The fresh threat of job losses comes despite record profits, announced last month, of £255 million for the nine months to 31st December.

Dave Ward, deputy general secretary of the CWU union, said: "We are not opposed to modernisation but these are random savings which have not been properly worked out. They have nothing to do with modernisation, they are panic measures that will hit the quality of service."

CWU itself came in for heavy criticism in the last major industrial dispute in the industry, after bosses restricted strike action to ineffective rolling activity, and signed an agreement on working practices which many regarded as a betrayal of the workforce.

Fire cover chopped back

Two more rounds of heavy cuts to fire provision on Merseyside and in South Yorkshire are being fought by staff as the poor settlements of last year continue in the same vein for 2009.

The Fire Brigades Union says Merseyside fire service has already made more cuts to front-line services than any other UK fire service.

According to the Government's own Audit Commission's official report *Rising to the Challenge*, Merseyside has made cuts of at least £23.125 million over four years, well in excess of the expected £3.12 million in savings. It means £20 million more cuts than was needed.

South Yorkshire firefighters meanwhile have voted overwhelmingly to keep their current shift system, following new proposals that would mean significant cuts in the number of firefighters amid serious doubts over managerial claims over the impact of the proposals.

IN BRIEF

AIR TRAVEL: British Airways (BA) and bmi are on a collision course with trade unions representing nearly 50,000 workers as both airlines try to impose pay freezes. The dispute could lead to strike action in the spring. BA wants its 43,000 staff to accept a pay freeze and Mr Walsh has also raised the possibility of job cuts. However, Unite, which represents nearly half the BA workforce, is insisting on a pay deal of inflation plus 2%.

MANUFACTURING: Vauxhall's plan to offer sabbaticals to its workforce – a period of time off which would see starkly reduced pay levels, has ground to a halt after voluntary takeup was limited to a handful of people out of its 2,200-strong Ellesmere Port complex. The company has said it is now looking at 'more radical' proposals to cut costs.

MANUFACTURING: Ford could face strike action over plans to cut 850 jobs and freeze pay, according to the Unite union. The company, which makes engines and Transit vans in the UK, said that it had to cut up to 500 jobs from its Southampton Transit van factory by May and 350 staff jobs throughout the country. A three-year pay deal, offered in November, needed 're-evaluation'. Ford has told unions that the 5.25% pay rise for this year, which was finally agreed by unions only last month, was no longer affordable.

PHARMACEUTICALS: GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) may shed about 6,000 employees globally. GSK employs 18,000 people in the UK in its manufacturing, corporate management and research and development divisions, around 20% of its global workforce.

UTILITIES: British Gas has beaten City profit forecasts for the tenth successive quarter, after successfully pressing the industry regulator to allow it to hike gas prices by 42% in a year, and persuading them that dropping these prices back down after the global markets stabilised would put them in financial jeopardy.

The last three months of 2008 proved a record quarter for LNG – operating profits rose nearly threefold year-on-year to £456 million – helping BG's earnings to beat consensus estimates by 15%.

WELFARE: The government's flagship policy to pay private companies to find jobs for the unemployed may be set to collapse, as firms said there were too many people out of work – and too few vacancies – to make it viable. News that Labour's plan is in turmoil and facing possible legal challenges comes as unemployment is about to pass the two million mark for the first time in more than a decade. Analysts believe it will hit three million before the end of this year.

Companies involved in the scheme were asking for massive handouts to pick up the unemployed for work.

Flare-ups on the railways

A number of flare-ups across the rail industry look likely in the next few months, as companies attempt to use the recession as a means to undermine existing agreements with the workforce and take on unions.

In Wales, Tyne and Wear and the Midlands, strike action has already been taken or is being considered as pay, conditions, job numbers and privatisation are contended.

Two pieces of wildcat strike action, one in Shropshire on 6th February and another of 8th February, took place in Wales against Arriva Trains, after workers discovered major discrepancies in pay across the company.

On the 6th, services were cancelled on five routes running out of Shrewsbury to Birmingham, Manchester, and Cardiff. On the 8th, a further six routes across the Valley Lines service were closed, including major runs for the Wales Six Nations opener against Scotland, after a barbecue day was called.

The stoppages were not supported by local train union Asef, who refused to back strike action.

Meanwhile a long-running dispute over privatisation of the Tyne and Wear Metro has spilled over into an open conflict, after state-owned operator Nexus refused to give any guarantees on the future of jobs and pay and conditions to staff potentially affected by the move.

The decision by Nexus to privatise the Metro has already been highly controversial, with campaigners arguing that its record as a publicly-owned concern has far outstripped private rivals.

Around three in four people support retaining the service in public hands, according to polls by ICM for the Keep Metro Public

group, and tens of thousands of anti-privatisation leaflets have been distributed along the network.

The RMT rail union is urging members to vote for action.

In London, around 100 RMT conductors working out of the London Midland depots in Northampton, Bletchley and Watford have balloted after the replacement company for their old employer, Silverlink, attempted to undermine an agreement on Sunday working.

"Ten years ago we signed an agreement with Silverlink that conductors did not have to work on Sundays if they gave the company a week's notice," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Even before Silverlink gave up the franchise they tried to renege on it, and the company unilaterally imposed a contract on new starters aiming at forcing them to work Sundays.

"Now we also have London Midland trying to force conductors to work up to 60 hours a week, although the agreement itself has never been amended."

Finally, more than 700 members of the RMT at rail freight group DB Schenker are also seeing ballots, after it threatened to impose a pay freeze and possible pay cuts, breaking an agreed existing pay award.

Redundancies are also in the offing, with the RMT demanding that the company adhere to a 90-day consultation deal on any job losses, which they say the company is not keeping to.

The news of rising anger across the industry follows major cuts to the funding of rail by the government, which demanded 22% savings on track maintenance from Network Rail in recent months.



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

BANGLADESH: Bangladesh's crucial jute sector has shed 25,000 jobs and shut three factories after a massive slump in export triggered by the global economic downturn.

The Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association said the country's 59 jute yarn factories had slashed production by 30% in the last three months.

BRAZIL: The MST landless movement has celebrated 25 years since its founding in the dying days of Brazil's military dictatorship. In late January 1984, a group of nearly a hundred 'landless' farmers from across Brazil met to debate the founding of a movement for agrarian reform. The movement has since forced the expropriation of 35 million acres of land to some 370,000 families.

GREECE: Cretan farmers have landed in Athens and clashed with riot police, leading to a wildcat general strike in Crete. The action saw hundreds of farmers land in the Athens harbour of Peiraeus, intending to drive their tractors to Parliament in protest against the agricultural policies of the government.

IRAN: Sajad Khaksari, the 25-year-old son of one of Iran's leading teacher trade unionists, was arrested on 28th January in Tehran and remains in custody. Local press have suggested Sajad's arrest is connected to the union activism of his father, Mohamad Khaksari.

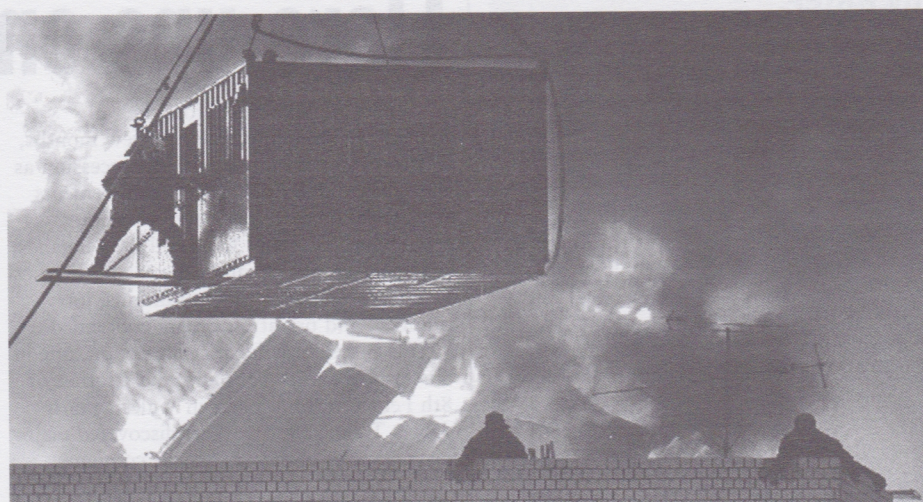
IRELAND: As *Freedom* goes to press, Waterford Crystal workers are continuing to occupy the famed Waterford factory. They are protesting at the decision by the receiver to stop manufacturing and make 480 staff redundant. The company, which employs 670 people, went into receivership at the beginning of January.

SERBIA: Workers in a Kragujevac factory who haven't been paid their wages for the past eight years are on a strike. The company, Partizan Kragujevac, has also failed to pay their health and pension insurance for the past five years.

SWITZERLAND: Between 1,000 and 2,000 activists showed up at the end of last month to express their opposition to the 2009 World Economic Forum, symbol of capitalism and corporate globalisation, in the ski resort of Davos. On the other side of the world, in Brazil, at the World Social Forum, more than 100,000 people met to discuss alternative economic visions, with the agenda heavily tilted towards the situation in Palestine and over indigenous rights in South America.

UKRAINE: Workers have occupied the Kherson Engineering Factory, elected a workers' council and drawn up a list their demands for the building, including payment of wage arrears and nationalisation of the plant without compensation.

LENS CAP SOUTH KOREA



Police use a crane to lift a SWAT team above the roof of a squat in South Korea in a metal storage container unit, as part of an eviction operation. The police sprayed the roof from the container box with a water hose, while the protesters resisted, throwing molotov cocktails. During the raid, which saw 1,500 police attempt to oust 50 squatters, a fire of unknown origins broke out within the makeshift fort. The police continued to spray water cannons and hoses at the roof, the water mixing with paint thinner and spreading the fire throughout the building. Five protesters and a police officer died. Following the disastrous assault, there were riots and protests across the country.

Activist kidnapped from prison

A libertarian and indigenous rights activist has been kidnapped from prison in Oaxaca, Mexico, by a commando unit of the state police, according to city sources, and is being held in an unknown location despite not having any prison sentence placed against him.

The afternoon move from San Pedro Pochutla prison saw a heavily armed unit spirit Abraham Ramírez Vásquez away in a white van with no license plates to an unknown address.

Abraham and two other indigenous men, Juventino and Noel García Cruz, have been held prisoner since 15th January 2005, under the direct orders of hated state governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz.

Supporters wrote: "Our comrades' crime was defending their forests and their traditional practices and customs. For more than four

years, the Ortiz government has been unable to prove that they committed the crimes they are accused of, and accordingly, they have not been sentenced.

"Our comrades are members of the Committee for the Defense of Indigenous Rights (CODEDI) of Santiago Xanica, a member organisation of the Magonista-Zapatista Alliance (AMZ), the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO), and adherent to the Other Campaign.

"Abraham Ramírez is a man of deep libertarian and human convictions, which have motivated him more than once, even from inside the prison, to struggle against the prison authorities for prisoners' rights."

Abraham was directly involved in the organisation of a popular kitchen inside the Pochutla prison, as the prisoners had no dining room there.

Notes from the United States

Any talk of redistribution of wealth in public is quickly slapped down as 'socialism', which automatically rules it out for even cursory examination in the minds of many otherwise thoughtful Americans.

Yet there are many examples of inequality which – if addressed – would bring in comparable sums of money for eventual infusion into the economy as the big state bailouts for business currently being bandied about.

For example, many Americans belong to schemes called 401(k)'s – basically a tax-deferred retirement plan. The highest amount

that most regularly salaried employees can put into this scheme (and hence on which they do not pay tax until they begin to draw on it when they stop working) is \$22,000 (£13,000) a year. But executives, hedge fund managers, film stars, athletes, entertainers and the like are legally permitted to save as much as they want without a cent of tax being collected. Billions of dollars could be collected if that were to end.

Twenty years ago about 10% of corporate profits were taken in tax havens like the

Vigil against Chernobyl cover-up

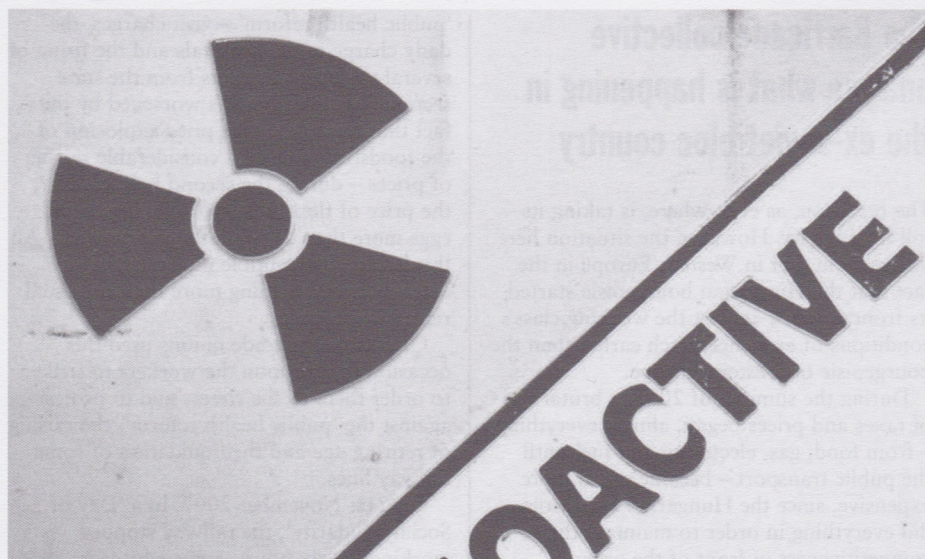
Chernobyl was by far the most serious nuclear accident to date, precipitating fall out exceeding many times that of Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. As politicians and lobbyists line up to rehabilitate the nuclear industry, historic horrors such as Chernobyl fade from memory, or are unknown to the younger generation.

Consequently, even within the environmental movement a challenge to the complicity of international institutions at the highest level in the alleged cover-up of the consequences of nuclear fall-out has gone unnoticed and unreported.

In 2007 concerned health professionals set up Independent WHO to draw attention to the close institutional collaboration of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on matters related to health and radiation.

A chief objective of Independent WHO is to highlight a 1959 agreement (WHA 12-40) which effectively established an operational affiliation between the two. Article I (3) states that "whenever either organisation proposes to initiate a programme or activity on a subject in which the other organisation has or may have a substantial interest, the first party shall consult the other with a view to adjusting the matter by mutual consent". The IAEA was set up with the stated principal objective "to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity".

For critics, WHO's concern to adjust matters creates a fundamental conflict of interests, making impartial analysis of, and therefore policy on, nuclear issues impossible. Alison Katz, an international civil servant with the WHO for 18 years, now with Independent WHO, objects: "The WHO is



our international health authority. The fact that it is subordinate to the IAEA is disastrous. The IAEA, which is mandated to promote peaceful use of the atom and is a nuclear lobby ... is judge and jury in the question of the safety of the activities that it promotes."

The suspicion that the WHO's close working relationship with the IAEA potentially constrains its objectivity particularly came to the fore on the publication of findings and a Joint News Release entitled *Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident* issued by the WHO, IAEA and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 5th September 2005 that appeared to downplay the consequences of the disaster.

Two decades after the headlines of 1986, sustained and determined pressure has continued to be brought to bear on the issue.

The direct correlation between radiation and incidence of victims' suffering and premature death is difficult to ascertain.

However, the WHO's figure of 4,000 has been hotly disputed by those who point to evidence of exponential increases in cancer and other serious illnesses in the immediately contaminated region.

Critics claim that independent discussion about the controversy has effectively been excluded from the decision-making framework. Since April 2007 (21 years after Chernobyl) volunteers have maintained a permanent vigil to draw attention to the WHO's failings at its Geneva headquarters. In April 2008 hundreds of anti-nuclear protesters surrounded the buildings.

SEH

For further information see independentwho.info

Notes from the Unites States

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Cayman Islands. Now it's closer to one-quarter of all corporate profits. A similarly quick way to close gaps and loopholes in public revenue would be to take back the college loan scheme as essentially an investment scam for the banks and businesses running them; they make typical returns of 17% on the \$85 (£50) billion business.

It's been estimated that Bush's tax cuts, when taken together with the bailouts, amounted to over \$8 (£5) trillion. They were mostly paid from borrowed money. That total is more than all the income tax paid by all Americans for the entire eight years of the Bush administration.

To look at the way that the money paid out by the Bush and Obama administrations has been spent is also to look at some otherwise amazing levels of corruption – from the private jet costing millions which CitiBank planned to buy with public bailout money, to the parties

and 'retreats' thrown by other recipients, through the huge bonuses doled out to directors, managers and board members to the general mismanagement and unaccounted for sums which have disappeared without trail or trace since the autumn. \$18 (£11) billion is one figure mentioned for such bonuses.

It's common knowledge that if the IRS (the US equivalent of the Inland Revenue) had sufficient resources to check on those who work for the big banks and hedge funds, they would find substantial amounts of money in otherwise taxable perks that are currently uncollected.

It's also been estimated that 85% of all income tax money is effectively transferred as capital to those who own the national debt – banks, insurance companies, big international business: those currently being 'bailed out'.

Louis Further

Radical unions urge strike expansion

Radical unions have praised the turnout for the French general Strike of 29th January, and have called for a consistent renewal of the strike across industry. The French CNT said: "The CNT-FTE welcomes these dynamics. We will win by building a genuine balance of power, which requires that workers expand the struggles in all sectors, to deny attacks by reactionary government and to defend the historic achievements of workers and to win new ones based on equality."

The general strike saw between 1.1 million (police figures) and 2.5 million take to the streets on the day, with support coming particularly from the teaching unions, in electricity, postal work and health.

The eight largest French unions are demanding that the government do more to counter rising unemployment and falling purchasing power as France enters its first recession in 16 years.

FEATURE

Recession in Hungary: an advance

The Barricade collective analyse what is happening in the ex-soviet bloc country

The recession, as everywhere, is taking its toll in Hungary. However, the situation here differs from that in Western Europe in the fact that the Hungarian bourgeoisie started its frontal attack against the working class's conditions of existence much earlier than the bourgeoisie of Western Europe.

During the summer of 2006, a brutal rise of taxes and prices began, almost everything – from food, gas, electricity and fuel until the public transport – became much more expensive, since the Hungarian bourgeois did everything in order to maintain their competitiveness in front of the other bourgeois groups of the region.

In spite of continuous attacks against the working class's conditions of existence they still face serious problems: the budget deficit is extremely high and foreign public debt is constantly rising, while the worldwide recession can be felt more and more.

Financial stability is seen as a priority – first of all, in order to pump more and more money into their companies and in order to keep the state up and running since the bourgeoisie still needs police, army and the functioning of public administration. And, of course, they must throw some titbit for the working class, too, which is bawling.

Secondly, the economic situation of the country should be stabilised in order to stimulate the flow of capital from abroad.

As a result of the 2006 rises, working class living standards fell considerably during the next year, which was crowned by the introduction by the government of

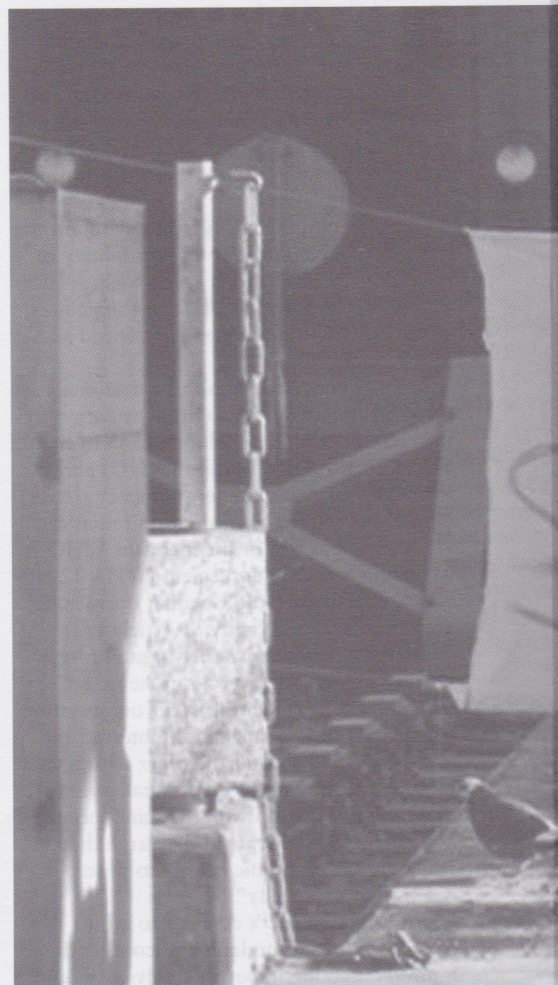
'public health reform' – visit charges, the daily charge in the hospitals and the firing of several thousand workers from the state sector. The situation was worsened by the fact that the worldwide price explosion of the foodstuffs caused a considerable raising of prices – during the second half of 2007, the price of flour was up 60%, bread and eggs more than 20% on the previous year. All this led to a perceptible increase of discontent but nothing more than the usual reformist practices.

Of course, the trade unions used this occasion to call upon the workers to strike, to order them to the streets and to protest against the 'public health reform', the raising of retiring age and the liquidation of some railway lines.

On 21st November 2007, in a 'Day of Social Solidarity', the railway stopped working for six hours, some educators also went on strike, work stopped for two hours at Malév (airline company), at some services of Volán (bus company) and some other big companies.

Tens of thousands of workers were striking, and in the evening, they marched to the Parliament to beg at least some small concessions – who, of course, ignored them. There was no significant interruption of production, the trade union control functioned well, the workers could express their discontent within the frame given by democratic rights. Social peace was confirmed.

The bourgeoisie could therefore calmly continue its shock therapy against the working class. The government piled it on in 2008. During the year, it raised the price of gas four times, altogether by more than 27%. Foodstuff prices also continued to increase, while the effects of the world-wide economic recession reached Hungary in the



On 21st November 2007, a banner reading 'Strike' is visible in Hungary, as railway workers began a strike that hit

second half of the year. Many factories were closed or decreased their production, mainly in the car industry and among electronic assembly plants. Since autumn 2008, more than 20,000 workers have been fired, the number of registered unemployed has reached 470,000. Further lay-offs are announced almost every day.

There was almost a state bankruptcy in October as the financial crisis hit. In order to avoid a total collapse, the government asked for a credit line of 20 billion Euros from the IMF, World Bank and the European Union, to be pumped into the banks, fill the state reserves and stop the weakening of Forint. All this, of course, is at the cost of the working class. The money shall be paid back within three to five years – by us.

Today, the workers act exclusively according to their individual interests. Workplace communities have essentially disappeared, class solidarity is almost non-existent, and many Hungarian workers are not even aware of the fact that they are members of a social class.

This is the reason why workers who are



ce edge of class war



is seen in front of the standing trains at the empty Keleti (Eastern) railway station of Budapest, both local and international rail traffic.

anxious for their workplaces, who are discontented because of the continuously falling living standards, who are imbued with various bourgeois ideologies, follow the trade unions. On 7th April 2008, the workers at BKV (Budapest Transport Company) struck from dawn until 1p.m. They demanded more state support for the company, in order to prevent future lay-offs.

At the end of November, workers employed in the public sector also went to the streets, they protested against the repeal of the 'salary for the 13th month' and massive lay-offs, and demanded a wage increase of 4%, which had been promised earlier.

They held out the prospect of a strike in January if their demands are not fulfilled. Some 10,000 firemen, teachers, policemen, public health workers, etc., were gathering in front of the Parliament, and after handing the petitions over, all the well-mannered citizens peacefully went home. And the trade unions performed fulfilled their duty, they soon came to an agreement with the government, according to which in 2009, the workers will receive the 'salary for the

13th month' through monthly payments. In exchange, the unions won't call a strike until September.

The end of the year was somewhat more eventful. Early in December the workers at Malév once again went on strike. They demanded a new collective agreement, the ceasing of outsourcing, and the payment of those wages which the company was behind with. The bourgeois brought scabs from Greece, and the strike ran out of steam till the second half of December, when the trade union suspended it.

During the year, the railway workers went on strike several times. The last strike, on 14th December, was called by VDSZSZ (Free Union of Railway Workers) which is openly flirting with conservative political party Fidesz, the main opposition.

The demand was the same as earlier: a single allowance of 250,000 Forints for each railway worker and a wage-increase of 10% for the outsourced workers. The strike was finally suspended over Christmas – on this 'sacred holiday' class struggle also takes a pause. Later all trade unions except VDSZSZ accepted the wage-increase of

4.1% – the offer of the company – but a continuation of the strike can be expected this year.

The growing discontent of the working class is being exploited by the right wing, which is campaigning with anti-capitalist slogans, bawling against 'foreign' capital and promising that the 'Hungarian state' under their leadership will take steps against the so-called 'wild capitalism'.

In accordance with this, Fidesz managed to continuously mobilise those workers who had fallen under the magic spell of Viktor Orbán and the national idea against the 'public health reform' started in 2007. It organised several demonstrations in the countryside against the privatisation of hospitals, then it started a campaign for signatures in order to achieve a referendum. The campaign set a huge mass in motion. At last, as a result of the referendum on 9th March 2008 – where around four million people participated – the government was forced to cancel the visit charge, the daily charge in the hospitals and the tuition fee in the universities.

Obviously, this action led to a further growth of Fidesz's popularity, so it's almost sure that in 2010 the Christian-nationalists will lay their hands on the steering column once again.

Under the circumstances of the continuous fall of working class living standards and with general discontent, the tendency of looking for a scapegoat grows stronger, and some groups of workers organise themselves into fascist lynching brigades.

An expressive example of this is the Hungarian Guard which was organised back in 2007. The organisation was founded by Jobbik, one of the fascist parties. The recruiting of members is permanent, county organisations have been created, the number of members is now more than 2,000.

Apart from the Hungarian Guard, the fascists are active in general. During the last year, there were several attacks with Molotov-cocktails, grenades and arms against the houses of working class members of Gypsy origin.

In spite of the credit line of 20 billion Euros, further economic recession is to be expected, and in addition, the Forint is weakening again. Accordingly, the bourgeoisie continues to tighten the screws: the condition of obtaining some sorts of benefits will be the performance of communal work, there's a prospect of new tax increases, further restrictive measures, massive lay-offs.

But because of the increasing unemployment, the restrictions and the weakening of Forint, it will be more difficult to pay off the credits taken up in foreign currency and the import becomes more expensive. This means that the living standards of the working class continue to fall.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

While others may be withdrawing a bit, given all the recessionary gloom, the Freedom Press collective is fully intending to go places. The most recent meeting of the Freedom Press collective has set the tone for the next little while, coming up with some new plans and ideas for where we'd like to go next to make Freedom an indispensable part of the anarchist movement.

The first part of this has been the complete renovation of the downstairs of the building and the moving of the shop, which seems to have made an almost instant impact with a tremendous increase in sales during December.

In this vein of moving up and on, we can now announce the Freedom Press website is back up and running, and a bunch of extra features are being worked on which we shall keep you informed of.

If you want to get involved in our interesting times in some capacity, by helping us get our literature out, getting our name around or even by improving the literature itself, the address is below!

Rob Ray

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To work out if your subscription is due for renewal, look at the number above your name on the address label. This issue is vol 70, no 3, so if your sub runs out with this issue you'll have 7003 above your name. If the number is 7003 or less, then then your subscription is due for renewal. See page 16 for the subscription rates and a renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your subscription to *Freedom*, ask for a standing order form at subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

CONTACT DETAILS

Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX
Tel/fax: 020 7247 9249
www.freedompress.org.uk
Enquiries: info@freedompress.org.uk
Copy/Letters: copy@freedompress.org.uk
Subscriptions: subs@freedompress.org.uk
Bookshop: shop@freedompress.org.uk
Freedom Press Distribution (trade book orders): distro@freedompress.org.uk

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 28th February 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 19th February. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

A few issues back I wrote about the Baby P case and touched on the then director of Children's Services in Haringey, Sharon Shoemsmith. She was vilified in the press for her failures when the service she was in charge of had numerous contacts with a baby who was abused and killed by his mother, her partner and her fascist lodger. What made most people more angry was that she showed no sense that she might have contributed to his death. When the case first became known, she defended the service with pie charts and graphs that showed, proved even, that it was a good service. Ofsted, who had inspected Haringey's Children's Services agreed.

Subsequently she was sacked and a new report commissioned that proved just as conclusively that the Children's Services department was failing. How can two inspection reports, looking at the same thing, come to such different conclusions?

The answer lies in the nature of bureaucracies and in that of politicians. Bureaucracies are defined by process. Passage up a career path within them is dependent on learning the unique languages they use and conforming to the way that the organisation as a whole thinks. By conforming to these, individuals show that they fit in to the bureaucracy as a whole, and are thus suitable for promotion.

Politicians tend to think they have all the answers (okay, more modest ones might admit to only having some). When their policies don't work, they look around for reasons. To understand the reasons they need to understand what is happening in the service they are running. So, statistics are collected. Modern information technology has made this a growth area, though mainly for graduates with no experience of what it is

they are measuring. I'm told that, in the arena of business analysis, knowing something is seen as a handicap, but I'll return to this. Put procedures and statistics together and you usually get what I call a 'box-ticking culture'. Sharon Shoemsmith was a prime example. I've heard of decisions being made because they are a 'quick win', meaning that a small change will hit a target relatively easily.

I used to work for a local council and it was clear who would make progress and who wouldn't. Some people were in relatively senior management positions simply because of their value to the bureaucracy, which was often unrelated to their competence. When I moved to a high-profile private sector company they were even more bureaucratic. However, I've been around long enough to see the people in charge of statistics change, every time there is a change in management. They change because the new manager needs a different approach to the data and the boxes to be ticked. If people are asked to lie at work they tend to object (unless they're in sales or PR, of course). Better to bring in people who don't understand the business so that the stats show exactly what you want. You can then get the professionals in PR to adapt your questionnaires so that criticism is discouraged – we've all had them, giving a set range of responses and a box for free text at the end which will be ignored.

Of course, in the real world, the people who are recorded in the statistics know they are bollocks. How many Haringey social workers tried to blow the whistle? How many people who receive a service from the local council really rate it as excellent or very good?

Blog Bites

(from slackbastard.anarchobase.com)

The antics of somewhere between eighty and several hundred teenage boys on Manly beach on Australia/Invasion/Survival Day (26th January) has triggered some inevitable expressions of anguish over Australia yoof, and the uses to which yoof put the Australian flag.

Inevitable too, the drawing of comparisons with the violent racist outburst at Cronulla beach in 2005. In 2009, however, the odds were far less favourable for the young patriots – 80:1 as opposed to 5000:1. Nevertheless, the boys did succeed in wounding a teenage girl (of Asian descent), as well as frightening a lone taxi driver (a Sikh), a few (non-white) shopkeepers, and a number of local families with children.

Enough to make any digger's heart swell with pride.

Naturally, 'outsiders' are being blamed for the troubles ... many of the yoof supposedly came from suburbs other than Manly. By the same token, local police are keen to play down the significance of the teenagers' antics.

However, it may be that the general public is becoming rather tired of the notion that being a (white) Australian and carrying a flag entitles you to act like a complete arsehole ... or that having chosen to be born to non-white parents is a moral failing deserving of abuse, ridicule, or even physical assault.

More broadly, draping such dickheaded behaviour in the Australian flag does not bode well for the continued celebration of the Australian nation on 26th January (the day in 1788 that the British Empire landed in Australia), and reinforces calls for a day of nationalistic feeling to be moved to some other date. This won't happen overnight ... PM KRudd has already made that very clear ... but it may well be inevitable.

The problem for KRudd is that "establish[ing] and promot[ing] symbols of reconciliation ... would include changing the date of Australia Day to a date that includes all Australians"; an "essential action" with regards the "symbols of reconciliation".

Co-operatives and conflicts!

I'm not sure whether Joseph Kay ('Co-ops or conflicts?', *Freedom*, 20th December) actually read my article on co-operatives before writing his piece. I would guess not, as it has the feel of a standard libertarian communist response against co-operatives within capitalism.

I had hoped that my article had made clear that suggesting co-operatives was a short-term solution for those workers facing closing workplaces or whose bosses are seeking bailouts. I did not address the issue of (so-called) 'self-managed exploitation' simply because that is a different question, relating to the issue of co-operatives within capitalism and the future libertarian society. As my original article addressed neither issue. Instead it was a call for action, plus an explanation why co-operatives were a valid *socialist* alternative to bail-outs and nationalisation within the current crisis.

Firstly, I do need to point out a few contradictions in his argument. He proclaims that we are "in no position to demand anything. As a tiny minority in the class, our 'calls' for this or that are impotent cries". Yet, without irony, he raises various "Communist demands" we should be making! What is it to be? I guess that his real objection to demands to create co-operatives is that he opposes that specific demand.

Key suggests that "Communist demands are concrete, material demands reflecting our needs as workers". Apparently avoiding unemployment does not reflect our needs as workers. Is he seriously suggesting that workers, faced with the closure of their workplaces, should simply collect their P45s and head straight to the unemployment office? That the task of anarchists is not only to *not* suggest occupations but to *oppose* them as "petit-bourgeois"? Or that we should be indifferent when public (our!) money is used to bailout the muppets who got us into this crisis to begin with?

Somewhat ironically, he lists some "concrete material demands" we should "make" (forgetting that we are "in no position to demand anything"), namely "no to job losses, wage cuts, public service cuts and evictions". No evictions? Like when bosses close their workplaces and evict their workers from them? And how would we ensure no evictions? Perhaps by occupation? And how are the occupiers to resist the resulting 'wage cuts' this would create (I doubt the bosses would pay them wages)? Perhaps by resuming production under their own control? Surely occupation of workplaces in the face of closure is but one of many "concrete material demands" anarchists should be raising?

And that is a key point. I never suggested that supporting co-operatives was the only tactic we could make in the current crisis. Far from it! Need I point out that deciding to turn your workplace into a co-operative involves both the "advocacy of collective action" and "mass meetings"? Need I point out that it is a form of direct action? So it is

a case of co-operatives *and* conflict!

Kay argues that co-operatives are pointless unless "backed by a class movement capable of imposing them. To call for this or that in the absence of such class power is to get ahead of ourselves; there are more pressing matters at hand." Yet, as I suggested, raising the demand that any bailout be premised on turning the firm into a co-operative is a means of encouraging the formation of such a movement, a movement we can both agree is sadly lacking just now. Nor can it be considered getting ahead of ourselves to suggest possible libertarian solutions to the 'pressing matters' of bailouts, workplace closures and unemployment!

So need I say that my suggestion for co-operatives was aimed at encouraging workers to act for themselves, to get them to find their own solutions to the problems caused by the current crisis? As such, I agree with Kay that "our activity should be aimed at increasing the confidence, power and combativity of the wider class". Opposing bailouts and closures with occupations and co-operatives is *part* of that, I would suggest.

Kay spends some time discussing the limitations of co-operatives. Capital, he argues, "cannot be managed in our interests, so it is pointless to try". Yet, as both Proudhon and Marx made clear, co-operatives are not capitalist. Suggesting that workers faced with unemployment form co-operatives hardly means, to quote Kay, that "class struggle – and with it the potential for revolutionary change – is short-circuited". Does he really think that the state or capital will happily let workers expropriate their workplaces? I doubt it. I noted how Kropotkin suggested union control as an alternative to nationalisation, I should also point out that in the 1880s Engels suggested as a reform the putting of public works and state-owned land into the hands of workers' co-operatives rather than capitalists. So were both Kropotkin and Engels advocating the ending of the working class as a "potentially revolutionary class" and the end of "class antagonism" when they suggested co-operatives as an alternative to

nationalisation? I doubt it.

Kay suggests that "often raised as a sort of intermediate, 'realistic' demand short of revolution" but that "workers' control under capitalism is simply self-managed exploitation" and that "establishing a co-op" would be "swapping one form of alienation for another, proletarian for petit-bourgeois". I plead guilty to the first charge, although I stress that my suggestion was an attempt to bring a revolution closer by encouraging direct action by workers – in other words, I am not aiming for "workers' control under capitalism" but rather workers' control (among other tactics) as a step towards ending capitalism.

As for 'self-managed exploitation', that is just confused. "Self-managed exploitation is not just a neat turn of phrase", Kay asserts but I disagree. I think it is confused term, although it is used to describe a serious flaw with even non-capitalist markets (i.e., the impact of market forces in decisions). However, that is fundamentally a different issue to the one I sought to address, namely a libertarian socialist alternative to bailouts, nationalisations and closures in an economic crisis. Once that is done, we can discuss the problems of co-operatives within capitalism and after a social revolution (although as I am a communist-anarchist we will probably discover we have little to disagree about bar some terminology!).

I would suggest opposing, rather than supporting, co-operatives is "not a stepping stone, but a cul-de-sac". I feel he is confusing the notion of piecemeal reform by co-operatives with a response to redundancies I have advocated. Perhaps it could be argued that expropriating workplaces in a non-revolutionary situation is a bad idea, yet why is it a non-revolutionary situation? Perhaps because workers are not expropriating their workplaces? Our focus should be, then, co-operatives and conflicts with both supporting each other in an attempt to first build the revolutionary workers' movement we are sorely lacking and, ultimately, to abolish capitalism!

Iain McKay

LETTERS AND COMMENT

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GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

Greek riots update

Some of the people involved with the Occupied London blog, which has reported on the rioting in Greece since Alexis Grigoropoulos's shooting, will be at a number of information and benefit events that are being organised across the UK as part of the Greek prisoner solidarity benefits. The dates are:

- Saturday 28th February at the Common Place, Leeds.
 - Saturday 23rd May at the Anarchist Bookfair, Cardiff.
 - Bristol dates and venues to be confirmed.
- At least one more London date will be added for mid-February, to coincide with the launch of Occupied London #4.

Though the blog has ended it didn't finish without first giving a thorough breakdown of what has happened over the past months and we reprint the section on arrests below. We also hope to have a fuller update of arrests/sentences in the near future.

More than 270 people have been arrested in connection to actions, since the beginning of the insurrection, on 6th December, in 15 cities. Of these, 67 have been detained, while 50 immigrants who were arrested on the first three days, were rapidly condemned to 18 months imprisonment and are being deported. In Larissa 19 arrested face charges under the anti-terrorist law. Countless of people were brought to the police departments but were released with no charges in the end.

McKay trial ends

After lengthy deliberations between a deadlocked jury, the first court hearing of David McKay has ended with a mistrial. David was charged with making Molotov cocktails with the intent of throwing them at protests against last year's Republic Convention in Minnesota.

His case has made national headlines in the US. The twist in the tale came when a well known long-time activist, Brandon Darby, declared himself to have been an FBI informant and testified against McKay and another activist, Bradley Crowder, triggering a wave of anger and denunciations across the US anarchist community.

Indymedia posters noted that "Darby operated in and around the Austin community for about six years, and this is the same Brandon Darby who participated in the Common Ground Collective in New Orleans during 2005-06. Based on the evidence we have, Brandon has been giving the state information since at least November 2007."

A federal grand jury indicted the two men on firearms charges, meaning lengthy jail sentences.

David, 23, could get up to ten years. Bradley, also 23, is facing up to four years in prison after pleading guilty to one of three counts placed against him, while the state dropped the other two. A sentencing date has not been set for Bradley, while David is due to go to a retrial in March. Email: rnc08felonies@riseup.net



● So far more than 60 families due to be evicted from Dale Farm in Essex have sent in homeless applications, still hoping the council will provide an alternate place to live in the form of a mobile-home park.

But although they have promised to comply with their duties, Basildon District Council have already rejected a Joint Homeless Application and many individual claims, alleging people have made themselves intentionally homeless.

It also claims it has no land for a caravan park and may only offer flats or houses.

Activists in the community are asking for people to offer their help and act as Human Rights Monitors to see, if possible, that the council and police act within the law. The job of Monitors will be:

1. To assist in tracking homeless applications (including attending interviews).
2. Attend meetings with Basildon Council officials and police aimed at securing agreement for the strict adherence to health and safety regulations and for a church-supported evacuation plan for small children and sick persons (before heavy machinery, bailiffs and riot police enter the site).
3. Be present at the eviction to help see these agreements(if made) are upheld.

Contact dale.farm@btinternet.com for more information.

● A Scarborough-based collective are in the process of setting up a social centre for the area, and are asking for experienced people to help out. They said to *Freedom*: "There is a lot of creativity in this town and we hope to join all the local groups up via the info shop, we would be offering books, small cafe, workshops and a space for people to feel relaxed. We already have a grant for £3,500 to set up a Climate Change Centre. And we are hoping to rent a three-storey building in Scarborough town centre. We would appreciate any information or advice you could send us, pitfalls to avoid, etc." Email: scarboroughhccc@hotmail.co.uk

● A diary for 2009 listing radical historical events to correspond with each date has been launched. *The Wor Diary 2009*, which was launched at the Star & Shadow cinema in Newcastle, is available from £4 direct, from wordiary.org.

The organising collective noted: "The North East has a history of people challenging authority and injustice. For lots of reasons this history is forgotten. In the 2009 diary, every day relates to events that happened in north east history to help us be inspired to change our lives and surroundings. Each page has been drawn by local participants who now number close to sixty-odd people."

A prole's guide to the recession

A glossary of some economic terms for ordinary people, which was first printed by the group Wildcat during the last recession in the UK in the early 1990s. Many of its explanations are equally valid today.*

Inflation

A means of attacking real wages (as stated by J.M. Keynes in his *General Theory...*). A common means of making the working class pay for wars, for example. It can also be a concession to the working class since it tends to keep inefficient businesses functioning – every wage slave with a grain of class consciousness knows that these are the best ones to work for! Inflation tends to undermine debts (by reducing the value of repayments) and so favours industry relative to finance capital, creating more employment so as to maintain social peace. This was why the post-war boom (a sort of productivity deal on the level of society) needed a few percent inflation per year. High inflation, then, is generally a sign that the bourgeoisie is weak since it has to buy social peace. This is why the Thatchers of this world are always going on about fighting inflation. At the G7 conference in July when they were talking about restructuring the CIS (even more!) John Major described hyperinflation as the “seedcorn for revolution”.

Anti-inflation policies

Another means of attacking wages, this time by means of mass unemployment. This can be a risky business though. In Germany in 1930 a political commission, the Braun Committee, proposed to combat the depression by means of expanding credit (a classic inflationary measure). Hayek (the guru of anti-inflation measures, much praised by Thatcher) sent an article to his friend Professor Röpke, who was on the committee, attacking such measures. However, he enclosed a covering letter saying:

“... But if the political situation is so serious that continuing unemployment would lead to a political revolution, please do not publish my article.”

The article was not published!

Devaluation

An important strategy in countries where most wage goods are imported (Britain being a prime example). By reducing the value of the currency the real value of the wage is reduced. It is a means of carrying out a short term attack on wages. The disadvantage is that although it filches money from workers' pockets it doesn't actually attack them directly through restructuring in the way that the 1981 recession did. Just taking money from us proles without restructuring society can sometimes be a positively bad idea – as the example of the poll tax clearly showed! Nowhere is the class nature of devaluation



better understood than in the Lebanon. In early May 1992 the Central Bank announced it would no longer support the currency (the lira). As soon as it fell to 2,000 per dollar there were widespread strikes and riotous demos resulting in the burning of the finance ministers home, an attack on the St George's Yacht Club in Beirut (where ministers were swanking it up with other Arab bourgeois) and the collapse of the Syrian-backed government.

Keynesianism

Originally the ideas of Keynes, formulated in the 1920s, were presented as a way of saving capital from communism (or ‘chaos’ as it was sometimes described). After 1945 Keynesianism became the ideology of overall political management of the economy (e.g. ‘fine tuning’). What it actually was was a productivity deal on the level of the society based on the welfare state and full employment. It needed strong unions to police productivity and wage agreements. It also needed the Cold War to depoliticise the working class – revolution being presented as something foreign, paid by Moscow, etc. Keynesianism is not something likely to be revived in the near future.

Recession

A slow down in the growth of total commodity production. We are supposed to regard this as a disaster. A formulation which completely ignores the relation between wages and profits. Funny that.

Depression

Like a recession but worse. Mostly used on the level of propaganda – ‘if we don't make

the painful changes now, the recession could turn into a depression’. Related terms: ‘slump’, ‘double blip’.

Economic collapse

This is something that never happens but is always threatened – e.g. ‘Bosnia on the verge of economic collapse’. What is usually meant is that working class living standards are collapsing. As long as capitalist social relations exist so will the economy – the only thing that can cause real economic collapse is the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Recovery

This is what we're all supposed to be praying for, commodity production increasing at the rate it used to. This doesn't necessarily mean that us proles will be any better off, even in capitalist terms. It doesn't even have to mean a reduction in unemployment. During the ‘recovery’ in the mid-1980s in Britain it continued to rise. What it definitely would mean is more traffic on the roads to run us over, more new roads to disfigure the landscape, higher housing costs ... They can keep it!

It should be clear from the above that if an economist says something you don't understand what they probably mean is ‘Work harder for less!’.

* From Wildcat (UK), no. 16, Early 1990s. Text edited mostly for brevity by libcom. The original article is available here: <http://libcom.org/library/proles-guide-recession-economics-truth-wildcat-uk>

Coverage of the credit crisis here: libcom.org/tag/credit-crisis

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON
FEBRUARY

14th Benefit for Greek rebellion defendants/prisoners and the Smash EDO Eight, with bands and DJs from 8pm at The Plough, Kilburn Street, Easton, Bristol, £4, see <http://bristolabc.wordpress.com>

14th Anarcho speed dating, come and have a giggle, check out the stalls, buy a newspaper and meet some anarchists at this anti-valentine's day event at The Cross Kings, 126 York Way, London N1 0AX from 7pm, see <http://londonclasswar.org/newswire/> for more

16th Film showing of *The Wobblies* (aka the Industrial Workers of the World, or IWW) at Pogo Café, 76a Clarence Road, London E5 8HB at 7.30pm, contact 020 8533 1214 or see pogocafe.org.uk for further details.

18th Campaign for Climate Change present a talk and book launch for *Too Little, Too Late: the Politics of Climate Change* by Colin Challon MP at Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, at 7pm, see housmans.com for details.

19th Heathrow expansion protest outside Downing Street, London, from 5.30pm until 7pm, see campaigncc.org/heathrow.html

21st Launch party for *Occupied London* at Freedom bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, from 6pm, see freedompress.org.uk or occupiedlondon.org

21st and 22nd Brighton Zine Fest at Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 3PS and West Hill Community Village Hall, Compton Avenue, Brighton BN1 3PS, from midday, see brightonzinefest.co.uk for more details.

26th Amnesty book sale at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL from 11am until 7pm, all books £1 or £2, contact sarah.dodgson@amnesty.org.uk or call Sarah D. on 07771888825 for more.

27th SHAC (Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty) demo at the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London EC2R 8AH, at 12 noon, for details call 0845 458 0630 or see shac.net for more information.

MARCH

4th Launch party for new edition of Kropotkin's masterpiece on evolution, *Mutual Aid*, at Freedom bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, from 7pm, see freedompress.org.uk

14th Freedom March against police state, meet at Worthing Town Hall, Chapel Road, at 2pm, part of Worthing festival of liberty, see eco-action.org/porkbolter for more.

14th 25th anniversary of the miners's strike, working class bookfair from 11am until 4pm at Linskill Centre, Linskill Terrace, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 2AY, see <http://workingclassbookfair.vpweb.com> for more information.

21st Brighton Vegan Fayre at Brighton Centre, Kings Road, Brighton BN1 2GR from 11am until 6pm, call 0117 9239053, email info@yaoh.co.uk or see <http://brighton.veganfayre.org.uk> for more.

BOOKS

Landmarks in the Desert.

by Kent Winslow, published by The Match! (PO Box 3012, Tucson, AZ85702, USA)

The Match! has been in continuous publication for 40 years. It's a passionate journal, has a high standard of writing and is worth the price for its letter-pages alone. These are the principal reasons *The Match!* has earned itself a world-wide and loyal readership.

There are other reasons too. Most notable is its constant criticism of a modern technology dependent upon consumer up-dates and the frequent disposal of unserviceable equipment. *The Match!* practices what it preaches. All its publications are produced on machinery from an age when things were meant to last more than a couple of years. Only printing equipment that can be serviced and repaired by any competent operator is used.

Behind all successful journals is usually to be found a driven individual. *Landmarks in the Desert* is the barely concealed autobiography of its editor, Fred Woodworth. It's an extraordinary story. Kidnapped by an errant father at the age of ten, he is put to work on a remote radio station. From here he is apprenticed into an engineering system that relies on experience and resourcefulness. There is nothing in this book to indicate reliance on the state or upon big corporations. It is more the case that the state lays a heavy hand the other way around.

His account of being held down and tortured by a group of state police is genuinely horrifying. For this he ends up in court on a charge of assaulting the same policemen. Thankfully, a jury acquits him. Years later, and by chance, he encounters one of his tormentors – now a retiree – in a busy supermarket. He follows this guy out to the car park berating and screaming at him for the entire world to witness.

Fred's life is one with more than its fair share of bad characters. He lives with neighbours from hell, hostile landlords and heartless employers a-plenty. At one stage a huge, overweight Vietnam veteran threatens him with a heavy chain. But in none of this



will Fred call upon the state for help.

The book is an example of living a life as if big corporate suppliers and state-lackeys do not exist. On offer is a life of struggle and a brave confrontation with life's problems. Here's a book that is both intensely political, yet devoid of political theory: a book never far from the complex meaning of freedom.

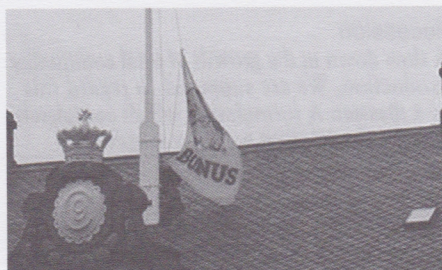
Pitted against his experience with seriously bad people is a deep and respectful love of animals. It's a preference sadly illustrated in a closing statement that, gratefully, he leaves no children to take on further suffering. As a statement it nails a depressive coda on an otherwise courageous life. Never give up. Never surrender hope. Kids generally want parents who engage with the world. No matter how harrowing life turns out to be.

A well-written and most engaging book. It inspires all of us who live unquestionably beneath the mantle of the state. I'm with you all the way, Fred. The Very Model of a Major Modern Anarchist.

Peter Good

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. David Attenborough. He gets letters telling him to burn in hell for not crediting God on his nature programmes. He said: "They always mean beautiful things like hummingbirds. I always reply



by saying that I think of a little child in east Africa with a worm burrowing through his eyeball. The worm cannot live in any other way, except by burrowing through eyeballs. I find that hard to reconcile with the notion of a divine and benevolent creator."

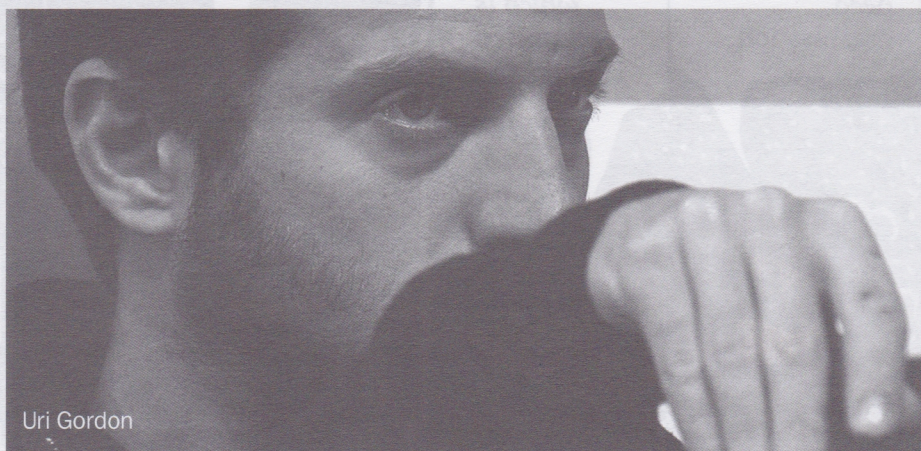
2. The Church of England.
3. Iceland. During demonstrations against the useless Icelandic government that had bankrupted the country, anarchist Haukur H. climbed onto the Parliament building and replaced the state flag with one of a discount supermarket (see picture, left).
4. It features a strike as a response the class system within the space fleet.

Anarchy Alive!

Despite its interesting account of organisational preoccupations among global protesters, Tom Jennings doubts this book's coherence as theory

The formidable organising capabilities of the last decade's global protest networks have helped gather many thousands of folks to disrupt late-capitalism's world cannibalism junkets – registering spectacularly in the corporate media and making links with an impressive variety of grass-roots groups worldwide. Uri Gordon's *Anarchy Alive!* celebrates their achievements as a radical coalescence of single-issue 'new social movements', with younger generations of activists graduating from animal rights, anti-nuclear and peace campaigns through environmentalist direct action to the various anti-neoliberal mobilisations at Seattle and thereafter. Many of those involved cite inspiration from libertarian philosophy, and the author plausibly interprets these trends as heir to the sixties countercultures given the complementary focus on 'alternative' lifestyles and subcultures. Supporting anthropologist David Graeber's assessment that this current 'revival' represents anarchism's "real locus of historical dynamism", Uri Gordon proposes that a workable politics can be distilled from dialogues generated among participants in groups engaged in action rather than privileging ideas dispensed by elite intellectuals. Purportedly avoiding vanguardism, theory can subsequently emerge as 'facilitated consensus' analogous to the group decision-making processes favoured.

His substantive arguments map the developing 'Anarchism Reloaded' as a 'political culture' abandoning fixations on the state and capitalism to recognise multiple separate dimensions of domination (based on gender, race, sexuality, etc, as well as class) – whose "family resemblances" require diverse and open-ended resistance via prefigurative direct action connected in "tribal solidarity". A surprisingly conventional account of interpersonal power relationships, coercion, democracy and accountability follows, concluding that creative blends of initiative, feedback and consensus-seeking counteract authority, hierarchy and centralisation. The book's second half then tackles topical themes within the milieux, stressing the implications of autonomous networking as the central mode of activity. Yet while valuable in clarifying specific controversies around violence, technology and nationalism, the conclusions drawn scarcely require the conceptual tools elaborated earlier – generally revolving around distinguishing tactics from strategy,



Uri Gordon

with disagreements mirroring pre-existing presumptions and prejudices. Thus, despite grand claims for an overall theoretical framework, *Anarchy Alive!*'s rather aimless trajectory suggests instead a fetishisation of form comparable to those criticised in classic anarchism, the Left and liberal politics – except that the goal of transcending oppression is now supposedly already achieved through individualistic "pure voluntarism" within and between affinity groups.

Reinventing wheels

Gordon does convincingly capture the fertility of horizontal networks of autonomous collectives in developing novel structures to facilitate action in contemporary contexts where more traditional methods often yield alienated stagnation. However, while reluctant to endorse sectarian divisions between these currents and class-struggle affiliates, he gives serious attention to neither the effects of class nor concrete economic struggles – whereas Ben Franks, for example, seeks common ground.² A symptomatic disjunction here may be slippage between concepts of affinity and solidarity – alternately reified or ritualised, but equally taken for granted as unproblematically positive. So distant indigenous movements like the Zapatistas are respected for confronting power with innovative tactics based on organic community bonds, yet the rich and continuing parallel history of communal cultural-political resistance closer to home is ignored. The latter's failings may be more painfully apparent, whereas romanticising exotic others allows the downplaying of our own biographical roots and embedding in problematic social matrices. This cannot be wished-away by magically reimagining 'primitive communism' through rationally-formalised ideal-type group-engineering, any more than meaningful working-class solidarity survives through obsessive-compulsive sloganeering.

But collective action around shared interests doesn't depend on liking or friendship, so *Anarchy Alive!*'s appeal to voluntary association as the foundation for liberation

seems misplaced if its material preconditions can't be freely chosen. After all, Western youth subcultures with genuinely oppositional overtones regularly emerge from disempowered lower-class strata, whereupon consumerist recuperation enforces distinctions between vulgar origins and the cultivation of middle-class sensibility. Social positioning, mobility and lifestyle preferences are inextricably intertwined, as are the varied mechanisms of subjugation that successions of liberal apologists (from Rainbow Coalitions to radical democrats with identity politics) insist are essentially unrelated. Poststructuralist insights to the contrary – that the evolution of governance has progressively fragmented operations of disciplinary power and control – are likewise denied in Gordon's individualistic understanding of domination, which disavows its historical, social and material-discursive dynamics (and helps explain why his treatment of group process is strangely reminiscent of management jargon). In general, solidarity unintentionally narrows to superior sympathy rather than humble empathy, and the here-and-now modelling of personal freedom – at best providing mere glimpses of utopia – risks shading into self-delusional arrogance and patronising charity towards us abject backward mugs outside the enlightened circle.

Not that the formal-membership anarchist organisations avoid such tendencies – their pronouncements occasionally seeming completely devoid of substance, whereas intermittent more flexible joint operations have looked promising. And if the horizontal interplay of temporary associations correlates with a lively and healthy grassroots public sphere – perhaps too readily assumed even as we've witnessed an implacable erosion of community – then this book's careful delineation of its characteristics and strengths and weaknesses in the specific experiences described could certainly contribute to more effective engagement in other contexts too. However, prefigurative direct action must surely sometimes deal with conflict and



Review

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difference as a matter of urgency without the luxury of protracted consultation, and furthermore changes of direction with long-term and wide-ranging implications may require general ratification. So federal and assemblyist structures appear inevitable – though such mechanisms should never preempt thorough prior deliberation among those affected wherever feasible. Conversely, secession and opting out seem self-indulgent, like voluntary exodus (and summit-hopping tourism) betraying an unwillingness to nurture roots and thrash out collective solutions. But in any case, many situations referenced in *Anarchy Alive!* already foreshadow productive combinations of autonomy and assembly.³

Ultimately, whether in miners' strikes, Reclaim the Streets and Liverpool dockers, anti-Poll Tax campaigns, peasant insurrections or shanty-town movements, social centre co-ordinations or Coalitions Against Poverty, anarchy is most alive when its proponents immerse themselves in local life while simultaneously pursuing the broadest possible connectivity.

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

1. David Graeber, 'The New Anarchists', *New Left Review*, 13, 2002 (www.newleftreview.org/A2368).
2. Ben Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms*, AK Press, 2006.
3. Other historical and contemporary examples feature in important recent contributions from Paul Mason (*Live Working or Die Fighting: How the Working Class Went Global*, Vintage,

2008) and Mastaneh Shah-Shuja (*Zones of Proletarian Development*, OpenMute, 2008). *Anarchy Alive! Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* by Uri Gordon, Pluto Press, £15.99.

THE QUIZ

1. Which television presenter gets hate mail from creationists and how does he respond?
2. Who apologised to Charles Darwin last year for "misunderstanding you and, by getting our first reaction wrong, encouraging others to misunderstand you still"?
3. Where was a supermarket flag with a pig flown from Parliament?
4. What unusual theme does the *Battlestar Galactica* episode 'Dirty Hands' have?

Answers on page 14

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ry: an advance edge of class war



On 21st November 2007, a banner reading 'Strike' is seen in front of the standing trains at the empty Keleti (Eastern) railway station of Budapest, Hungary, as railway workers began a strike that hit both local and international rail traffic.

second half of the year. Many factories were closed or decreased their production, mainly in the car industry and among electronic assembly plants. Since autumn 2008, more than 20,000 workers have been fired, the number of registered unemployed has reached 470,000. Further lay-offs are announced almost every day.

There was almost a state bankruptcy in October as the financial crisis hit. In order to avoid a total collapse, the government asked for a credit line of 20 billion Euros from the IMF, World Bank and the European Union, to be pumped into the banks, fill the state reserves and stop the weakening of Forint. All this, of course, is at the cost of the working class. The money shall be paid back within three to five years – by us.

Today, the workers act exclusively according to their individual interests. Workplace communities have essentially disappeared, class solidarity is almost non-existent, and many Hungarian workers are not even aware of the fact that they are members of a social class.

This is the reason why workers who are

anxious for their workplaces, who are discontented because of the continuously falling living standards, who are imbued with various bourgeois ideologies, follow the trade unions. On 7th April 2008, the workers at BKV (Budapest Transport Company) struck from dawn until 1p.m. They demanded more state support for the company, in order to prevent future lay-offs.

At the end of November, workers employed in the public sector also went to the streets, they protested against the repeal of the 'salary for the 13th month' and massive lay-offs, and demanded a wage increase of 4%, which had been promised earlier.

They held out the prospect of a strike in January if their demands are not fulfilled. Some 10,000 firemen, teachers, policemen, public health workers, etc., were gathering in front of the Parliament, and after handing the petitions over, all the well-mannered citizens peacefully went home. And the trade unions performed fulfilled their duty, they soon came to an agreement with the government, according to which in 2009, the workers will receive the 'salary for the

13th month' through monthly payments. In exchange, the unions won't call a strike until September.

The end of the year was somewhat more eventful. Early in December the workers at Malév once again went on strike. They demanded a new collective agreement, the ceasing of outsourcing, and the payment of those wages which the company was behind with. The bourgeois brought scabs from Greece, and the strike ran out of steam till the second half of December, when the trade union suspended it.

During the year, the railway workers went on strike several times. The last strike, on 14th December, was called by VDSZSZ (Free Union of Railway Workers) which is openly flirting with conservative political party Fidesz, the main opposition.

The demand was the same as earlier: a single allowance of 250,000 Forints for each railway worker and a wage-increase of 10% for the outsourced workers. The strike was finally suspended over Christmas – on this 'sacred holiday' class struggle also takes a pause. Later all trade unions except VDSZSZ accepted the wage-increase of